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**Providence Human Relations Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
July 11, 2016**

**The Open Session of the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) was called to order at 5:32 pm on the above date at Roger Williams University, 150 Empire Street, room 217, Providence, RI, 02903.**

**Commissioners Present:** Raymond Watson, Patricia LaSalle, John Gaffney, Matthieu Yangambi

**Absent:** Chace Baptista, Cesar Teo, Maria Monteiro, Lucy Rose

**Staff Present:** Director Jen Stevens, Deputy Chief of Staff Theresa Agonia, Asst. City Solicitor Charles Ruggerio

**Guests:** Kai LoMuscio

**1. Call to Order/Introductions:**

Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 5:32pm. A quorum was not established, as 4 of 8 commissioners were present. Introductions were made.

**2. Review of June 27, 2016 minutes and vote to accept/amend:**

This section was tabled for discussion at the next meeting.

**3. Director's Report:**

Since minutes could not be voted upon, Jen noted that the printouts of the minutes contained minor changes from what had been emailed, and that the June 27 minutes would be emailed again along with the July 11 minutes. She reported that the June 27 meeting's financial report was accurate through June 30 (the end of FY 2016), and that the FY 2017 budget is similar to FY 2016. While the money has been designated, Jen clarified that we must get expenditures approved by the Mayor's administration before we start spending.

Jen reported on the success of Friday's Cape Verde Flag Raising organized by Commissioner Lucy Rose. The ceremony was enjoyable, and there was a good turn-out, including Commissioner Gaffney. Commissioners affiliated with a community that may wish to raise its flag at City Hall should work with Jen to schedule these.

Eight candidates, including three candidates of Southeast Asian descent, are interested in filling the five vacancies on the commission. The Mayor would like all letters of intent and resumes to be received, and all meetings with Jen and Theresa to take place, before he chooses his appointments. Interested candidates are still welcome at this time.

Jen reported on mail received, asking commissioners if they had knowledge about an

invoice for interpreter services from November (probably the PHRC disability forum), and an announcement about USDA elections (nothing further known).

#### **4. Nominations and discussion relevant to the PHRC Executive Committee**

This section was tabled for discussion at the next meeting.

#### **5. Discussion relevant to PHRC Committees**

Jen asked if committees had been established in the past, and Ray offered that there were more committees when there were more staff members and projects.

Our Charter, ordinance, bylaws, and website all contain different language regarding the PHRC mission, so Commissioner Gaffney will work with Jen to standardize this language (“Clarification Committee”) and will consult Natasha before presenting it.

Jen noted that most inquiries she has received – from both constituents and City employees – have been in regard to housing. Through Jen’s role as Section 504 Coordinator, she’s aware of a specific need for a group to address housing discrimination. Therefore, a PHRC Fair Housing committee may be helpful.

The two killings of black men by police outside Minneapolis and in Baton Rouge, as well as the murder of five police officers in Dallas were discussed. There may be an opportunity for synergy with our local police force and we should identify groups working on these issues.

#### **6. Discussion relevant to trainings for Commissioners:**

Michael Evora, of the State’s Human Rights Commission asked Jen to be in touch next week to schedule free trainings, including: Overview of the State Commission, Fair Housing, and Sexual Harassment.

Jen is attending an Open Government workshop held by the Attorney General on 7/29. Commissioners are welcome to attend.

Chair Watson offered a cultural equity workshop, and will discuss details with Jen.

Commissioner Gaffney suggested participation in an environmental justice workshop, potentially led by the Environmental Justice League.

Mondays and Wednesdays are the best days to schedule trainings.

#### **7. Brainstorm community engagement activities: workshop, forum, listening tour ideas:**

In relation to an environmental justice training, Commissioner Gaffney suggested that the PHRC research and map brownfields to write a paper that would be provided to the City Council. It was noted that Ambar Espinoza of RI NPR may be a resource for this. Kai offered to help with research as needed.

Commissioner Gaffney suggested that his disability awareness training, which consisted of a tour around City Hall indicating ADA violations, may be helpful to repeat it with a more concerted outreach effort.

Commissioner Gaffney recalled that a Kerner Commission Report conference was conceived to happen decades ago, and could be quite effective now, especially considering the Report’s relevance to the national discussion on race relations and police conduct.

Charles confirmed that the PHRC has the power to endorse campaigns, activities, or events and lend general support.

A calendar of events, trainings, and meetings will be created to keep track of our

activities.

Jen said that an annual PHRC report has been customary in the past, though Chair Watson noted that activities were more prevalent when the commission was fully staffed.

**8. Discussion relevant to Commissioner biographies:**

Commissioners should provide a headshot (300 dpi or greater), or plan to shoot their photo at City Hall one day. A 200-word limit for the biography is suggested, and commissioners may write whatever they want about themselves. Commissioners will share the biographies with each other and have an opportunity to revise them before they are uploaded to the website.

**9. Next Meeting:** August 1, 2016, 5:30pm. Location TBA.

Commissioner Gaffney noted that he was able to attend the Cape Verde Flag Raising at City Hall because he had assistance using the wheelchair lift. If Jen can confirm that the proposed \$40,000,000 bond for infrastructure improvements to the City of Providence dedicates a significant portion to ADA compliance, Commissioner Gaffney will withdraw his expectation to meet outside of City Hall. It was noted that Commissioner Gaffney will still need assistance to operate the lift until it has been serviced (as promised).

**10. Adjournment:** 6:39 pm